Prasar Bharati has informed that the Prasar Bharati Board has decided to convert DD Metro into 24 hours News Channel. The decision has been taken to fulfil a growing desire for news among the viewers, particularly among those without cable connection.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) DD Metro was positioned as an entertainment channel and in the opinion of Prasar Bharati, the needs of the entertainment segment of programming are met by other channels, including DD National Channel.

Uplinking policy for news and current affairs

2333. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Star News conform to Government's uplinking policy for news and current affairs channels;

(b) if not, the reasons for which Government have given several extensions to the channel so far, and

(c) the fresh steps taken by Government for strict implementation of uplinking policy for news and current affairs channels in letter and spirit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) The proposal of M/s. Media Content & Communications Services (India) Pvt. Ltd. for uplinking Star News Channel from India is under examination. Clearance/comments of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Department of Space (DOS) were sought. Clearance from DOS has been received and from MHA it is awaited. An Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) has also been constituted consisting of representatives from Ministry of Law, Deptt. of Company Affairs and I&B Ministry to examine all aspects of the proposal including equity structure, ownership, etc.

(b) and (c) 'Star News' Channel was a running channel being uplinked from Hong Kong after getting feed from India through VSNL. Star News

Channel was required to conform to the revised guidelines for News & Current Affairs Channels by 25th June, 2003. M/s. Media Content & Communications Services (India) Pvt. Ltd. (MCCS) applied to this Ministry for uplinking of Star News Channel on 20th June, 2003. The application was forwarded to Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Department of Space (DOS) for comments/clearance on 25th June, 2003. As M/s. MCCS had applied to the Ministry for permission to uplink from India in prescribed format, they were given temparary uplinking permission for one week on 25th June, 2003 which was subsequently renewed upto 7th August, 2003. The temporary uplinking permission was given in view of the pendency of the application which is under examination.

Recording of evidence of witness through Video Conferencing

2334. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court has held that recording of evidence of witness even those residing abroad by Video Conferencing is permissible;

(b) whether Government have considered its implications; and

(c) whether this needs amendment of the relevant laws and rules etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI P.C. THOMAS): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) According to the judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, video-conferencing has been allowed. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has effected amendment to Section 167 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (Central Act of 1974).

It is upto the State Governments to effect amendment to the related Criminal Procedure Code in consultation with the High Courts. In case of any doubt in this regard, they seek the advice of the Central Government/Supreme Court.